



SHORT AND SWEET: THE ART OF CLEAR SENTENCES

Most of the time, I write the way I speak. Then, I'll send my work off to a friend or tutor to read. But often, their feedback is about the places where they have no idea what I'm talking about.

When I re-read, I often realize I've tried to plug too much information into individual sentences. Those ideas that sounded so carefully considered in my head suffer from a lack of clarity, and my writing gets confusing. I need to break those ideas into bite-size pieces.

When most of us speak, we speak with a certain flow, using our natural breath to break up sentences and convey meaning. In the revision process, I need to remember to create sentences that stop and pause for those natural breaths. I call this making my sentences short and sweet.

Long sentences aren't necessarily bad, but length raises the possibility that a sentence is more difficult to understand. Reading my writing aloud helps me identify where I might be packing too much into one sentence.

When I find a long sentence, I try to cut away words unessential to meaning. I also remember that a sentence should be one complete thought, not several separate thoughts strung together, so I look for ways to break overly long sentences into two or three.

As writers, we shouldn't make the reader work harder than necessary to understand what we're trying to say. Writing is about communication. The easier my sentences are to understand, the more readers I will reach.

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